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PTQ8525

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ACTION WHA-00

RELEASED IN FULL

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	CA-01	CEA-01	CIAE-00	COME-00
	CTME-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00	ITCE-00	DOTE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00
	EB-00	ED-01	EXME-00	E-00	FAAE-00	UTED-00	VC-00
	FRB-00	HHS-01	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	JUSE-00
	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OCS-03	OMB-01
	OPIC-01	PA-00	PC-01	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00
	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00
	EPAE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00
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R 192046Z DEC 01  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4336  
AMMBASSY BOGOTA 8458  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 229  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY LAPAZ  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
AMMBASSY PANAMA 0498  
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 003703

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: SOCI, ECON, PGOV, CASC, VE  
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SUBJECT: CRIME IN VENEZUELA-HOW BAD IS IT?

1. SUMMARY: CRIME HAS BECOME A HIGH PROFILE ISSUE IN VENEZUELA.

STATISTICS SHOW THAT VENEZUELAN'S HAVE GOOD REASON TO BE CONCERNED. HOWEVER, THE DANGEROUS REPUTATION THAT CARACAS HOLDS INTERNATIONALLY APPEARS TO BE EXAGGERATED RELATIVE TO OTHER CITIES IN LATIN AMERICA. END SUMMARY.

2. CRIME HAS BECOME AN EVER-PRESENT CONCERN IN VENEZUELA

AFFECTING VIRTUALLY EVERYONE. VENEZUELAN'S REPORT THAT FAR FEWER PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO GO OUT AT NIGHT. OUR CONTACTS OFTEN EXPLAIN THEIR INABILITY TO ATTEND REPRESENTATION EVENTS BY CLAIMING THEIR WIVES DO NOT WANT TO BE LEFT HOME ALONE OR DO NOT

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: NORMAN M BOUTON  
DATE/CASE ID: 19 AUG 2004 200400111

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WANT TO TRAVEL THROUGH THE CITY AFTER DARK. FOREIGN INVESTORS ARE CONSIDERING LEAVING VENEZUELA OR NOT RELOCATING HERE BECAUSE OF THE CRIME. FOR MIDDLE AND LOWER INCOME VENEZUELAN, CRIME IS OFTEN THE NUMBER ONE REASON THEY GIVE FOR THEIR DISSATISFACTION WITH THE CHAVEZ GOVERNMENT. IT HAS BECOME A MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUE BETWEEN PRESIDENT CHAVEZ AND CARACAS MAYOR ALFREDO PENA. TO DETERMINE THE BASIS FOR THIS CONCERN, THE EMBASSY HAS WORKED WITH VENAMCHAM AND SOUGHT THE HELP OF OUR NEIGHBORING EMBASSIES TO REVIEW CARACAS'S CRIME STATISTICS, BOTH IN AN HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND RELATIVE TO OTHER MAJOR CITIES IN LATIN AMERICA.

3. TABLE 1 BELOW SHOWS THAT VENEZUELAN HAVE A REASON TO COMPLAIN: CRIME HAS INCREASED. CARJACKING ROSE 66 PERCENT AND THE HOMICIDE RATE INCREASED BY ALMOST 17 PERCENT IN JUST TWO YEARS. HOMICIDE HAS ACTUALLY TRIPLED SINCE 1995. (THERE IS NO DATA ON OTHER CRIMES IN 1995.)

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TABLE 1: CRIME RATES, VENEZUELA  
(PER 100,000 INHABITANTS)

	1998	2000	% CHANGE
ARMED ROBBERY	136.63	152.07	11.3
CARJACKING	63.66	106.10	66.7
HOMICIDE	20.08	34.88	73.7
RAPE	14.63	12.74	-8.7

SOURCE: VENAMCHAM-VENEZUELAN AND AMERICAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND VENEZUELAN NATIONAL PENAL INVESTIGATIONS

4. HOWEVER, RELATIVE TO OTHER MAJOR CITIES IN LATIN AMERICA, CARACAS DOES NOT SEEM TO DESERVE ITS REPUTATION. TABLE 2 SHOWS THAT CARACAS'S HOMICIDE RATE IS ONLY SLIGHTLY HIGHER THAN BOGOTA'S AND MUCH LOWER THAN SAO PAULO'S. CARJACKING IS A VERY SERIOUS CRIME IN CARACAS, BUT THE RATE IS NOT MUCH HIGHER THAN BOGOTA. RAPE-ADMITTEDLY AN UNDERREPORTED CRIME EVERYWHERE-ALSO APPEARS RELATIVELY UNCOMMON IN CARACAS.

TABLE 2: YEAR 2000 CITY CRIME RATES  
(PER 100,000 INHABITANTS)

	HOMICIDE	ARMED ROBBERY	RAPE	CARJACKING
BOGOTA	40.10	119.21	2.40	94.5
CARACAS	46.20	165.52	10.0	118.6
LIMA	3.10	227.73	29.20	29.0
SAO PAULO	127.40	581.57	11.60	*
QUITO	15.30	*	*	40.1

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\*INCOMPLETE INFORMATION

SOURCES: UNITED STATES EMBASSIES-BOGOTA, LIMA, SAO PAULO AND QUITO  
VENAMCHAM-VENEZUELAN AND AMERICAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

5. KIDNAPPING, IS BELIEVED BY EVERYONE TO BE A GROWTH INDUSTRY,  
IT STILL APPEARS TO BE A RELATIVELY UNCOMMON CRIME, ALTHOUGH IT IS  
LIKELY TO BE SIGNIFICANTLY UNDERREPORTED.

TABLE 3: KIDNAPPING RATES FOR LATIN AMERICAN CITIES 2000  
(PER 100,000 INHABITANTS)

BOGOTA	2.40
CARACAS	1.50
LIMA	0.05
SAO PAULO	0.35
QUITO	1.80

SOURCE: VENAMCHAM-VENEZUELAN AND AMERICAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

6. COMMENT: GIVEN THE PROBLEMS IN DATA OUR ESTIMATES ARE ONLY  
APPROXIMATE. CRIME STATISTICS ARE SENSITIVE TO POPULATION AND  
CRIME IN LATIN AMERICA IS UNDERREPORTED. POPULATION ESTIMATES  
FOR LATIN AMERICAN CITIES FOR 2000 WERE BOGOTA 6,437,842;

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ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	CA-01	CEA-01	CIAE-00	COME-00
	CTME-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00	ITCE-00	DOTE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00
	EB-00	ED-01	EXME-00	E-00	FAAE-00	UTED-00	VC-00
	FRB-00	HHS-01	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	JUSE-00
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	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00
	EPAE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00
	/015W						

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O 000000Z DEC 01 MCN BLANK NOTIFICATION  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4337

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UNCLAS SERVICE MESSAGE SECTION 02 OF 02 CARACAS 03703

BOOK MSG

E.O. 12958: N/A

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